

Toxic Pollutants in Shellfish

In 2003 – 2004, monitoring will be performed for toxics in shellfish at 84 estuarine locations within Cape May and Atlantic Counties. Shellfish are an important component in the local economy of southern New Jersey. They also provide an excellent tool for monitoring coastal water quality. Monitoring toxic pollutants in shellfish gives the public a more long-term perspective on water quality. Shellfish filter large quantities of water and accumulate pollutants to levels many times higher than are present in the water. This makes shellfish an excellent indicator for toxic pollutant levels in coastal waters. This project would monitor the levels of toxic metals (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, mercury, lead and nickel) and total polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's) in shellfish tissue. Results of this monitoring would be compared to established federal standards and guidelines for safe consumption of shellfish. Comparisons to historical data will be made where possible to evaluate trends in pollutant levels in shellfish tissue. Data will be made available on the Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring's web page at <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/wmm/bmw>.

